

Message Text

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17

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

OMB-01 /066 W

----- 023773

R 222210Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5264

INFO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 2238

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PE

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT VELASCO

1. MAKING HIS FIRST APPEARANCE BEFORE CAMERAS (INCLUDING TELEVISION) SINCE HIS APRIL 24 MEETING WITH AUSTRALIA'S GOUGH WHITLAM, PRESIDENT VELASCO MET WITH CUZCO CAMPESION LEADER SATURNINO HUILLCA ON MAY 21. REGALED IN A TYPICAL COSTUME, HUILLCA PRESENTED VELASCO WITH A PONCHO AND CUZCO POTATOES AND EMBRACED THE PRESIDENT. THE LATTER STOOD BEHIND HIS DESK THROUGHOUT AN OBVIOUSLY STAGED CEREMONY WHICH APPEARS TO HAVE LASTED TWENTY MINUTES. HUILLCA SPOKE IN QUECHUA WHICH HAD TO BE TRANSLATED FOR VELASCO, WHO STATED THAT QUECHUA WOULD SOON BE DECLARED PERU'S SECOND OFFICIAL LANGUAGE.

2. VELASCO HAS NEITHER HAD A NORMAL PRESS CONFERENCE NOR RECEIVED AMBASSADORIAL CREDENTIALS SINCE JANUARY 29, WHEN HE HELD A MARATHON FOUR-HOUR CONFERENCE TO PROVE HE WAS WELL. NONETHELESS, VELASCO SUFFERED WHAT WAS PROBABLY A STROKE ON FEBRUARY 28 AND HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO TEND NORMALLY TO HIS DUTIES SINCE THEN. MUCH OF HIS TIME IS APPARENTLY SPENT RESTING AT HIS COUNTRY HOME. HE HAS MET WITH HIS CABINET ALTHOUGH IT IS UNCLEAR HOW LONG HIS

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PARTICIPATION IN THESE MEETINGS LASTED. PERU'S OFFICIALLY CONTROLLED MEDIA INSIST NEVERTHELESS THAT VELASCO IS WELL.

3. VELASCO'S RECLUSIVE BEHAVIOR CONTRASTS SHARPLY WITH THAT OF MOREALES BERMUDEZ, WHO HAS BEEN BARNSTORMING IN NORTHERN PERU WITH EIGHT MINISTERS IN TOW (SEPTTEL). AS FAR AS APPEARANCES ARE CONCERNED, VELASCO IS REIGNING WHILE MORALES BERMUDEZ RULES. IN ACTUALITY, NO MAJOR DECISIONS ARE BEING TAKEN WITHOUT CONSULTING WITH VELASCO WHO REFUSES TO BE COUNTED OUT DESPITE HIS INFIRMITIES.
DEAN

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NNN

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AIR SCHEDULES, AIRLINES, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LIMA02238
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: I
Film Number: D750095-1108
From: LIMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750592/aaaaglpp.tel
Line Count: 77
Locator: TEXT ON MICROFILM, TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LIMA 2123
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 SEP 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <04 SEP 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> mcm 971001
Subject: CIVAIR - DISPUTE WITH PERU
TAGS: EAIR, PE, US, AEROPERU, BRANIFF
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006